



City of Santa Clara

The Center of What's Possible

EL CAMINO REAL SPECIFIC PLAN Community Advisory Committee

Meeting #5 Summary

*Santa Clara City Hall, Council Chambers
1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050
March 21, 2018 | 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm*

Meeting Objectives

Receive input on architecture and urban design strategies, preferences, and desired guidance for the Specific Plan

Meeting Summary

Staff Presentation

- Staff presented an overview of the most recent City Council meeting and direction to prefer the preferred alternative plan concept.

Group Activity

At the request of staff, several CAC members brought pictures of urban design and architecture examples that they particularly liked or disliked, particularly around the following topics: 1) Architectural styles and features, 2) Building frontage and facades, 3) Building shape and bulk, and 4) Landscaping and open space. Many examples were focused on Santa Clara, but some include examples from nearby cities or even other countries. The Appendix below includes copies of many of the images that were submitted for discussion. The majority of the CAC meeting involved CAC members describing images that they brought, highlighting components they liked or disliked, and engaging in discussion with other CAC members, City staff (Steve Le and Lesley Xavier), and the project consultant (Aaron Welch of Raimi + Associates). Highlights of the discussion were as follows:

General Comments:

- Implementation: The City could consider 1) actively recruiting Activity Center developers, and 2) hiring a designer to design activity centers.
- Want to hear from developers who aren't working on current projects
- How can we get development amenities to go to the community first?
- Consider a 1% public art fee as in other communities – other CAC members cautioned against adding too many fees
- Consider giving the developer a list of community amenities to choose from.
- Consider an economist presentation focused on the right-sizing and feasibility of development, including topics like the cost to build development, timelines, and different balances of commercial, residential, amenities, and parking
- Consider different ways to support commercial space by consulting a retail expert – what does it take to support a business? Could we attract a Trader Joe's? How do lending practices impact business feasibility? What are the commercial drivers?
- There should be a plan for future community needs.
- How do we make activity centers a destination? They should have something truly special.
- Balance the supply of housing and office/workspace.

Comments on architecture and design:

- Santa Clara has the ability to “re-invent itself” and create its own style, since there is not a strongly established historical pattern or vernacular – there is opportunity for variety, a diversity of architectural styles, and create architecture.
- Establish rules prohibiting blank walls from facing the street, encourage massing breaks.
- Consider iconic, interesting architecture (debatable).
- Consider cafes on side streets.
- Building community by allowing more density.
- Provide street trees, interesting landscaping, open space and greenspace – this is critical for human health and happiness.
- Provide seating and hangout space.
- Provide points of interest along the ground floor.
- Limit overhangs over the sidewalk.
- Podium development techniques can make it hard to have breaks in building massing and limit the ability of light to enter the development.
- Provide community space that can be used for other uses like residential.
- Be careful about “faux” architecture, which does not look as authentic as real structural architecture.
- Make sure there are address numbers that you can read.
- Create pockets of Main Street-like areas for local residents to walk to.
- Look for opportunities to provide rooftop amenities.
- Encourage community spaces for gardens.
- The high-tech industrial look is generally not appropriate in more traditional neighborhood locations – on the other hand, some examples, like the nearby Whole Foods, work well.

- Not everything should be Mission-style.
- Make the street-level frontage visible and attractive.
- Consider defining frontage and façade types or strategies.
- Encourage LEED structures and consider how this impacts the architecture.
- Balcony allow private activities and break building mass by adding articulations to the building wall.
- Consider limitations on balconies facing El Camino Real – Juliet balconies with sliding doors are OK. Prevent storage on balconies.
- Encourage window depth for articulation.

Specific Building and location examples:

- The Alameda has examples of good pedestrian-oriented ground-floor retail, including things like regular doors and windows, massing breaks and articulation, architectural variety, street-activating retail, and street trees.
- King and Washington Street in Washington D.C. is a good example of well-designed ground-floor retail.
- The polygon Invidia building is an example of creative architecture that should be allowed when done well.
- Intersection of Lawrence and El Camino is an example of badly designed buildings and pedestrian realm.
- There is a very ugly building on 101 just before Santa Clara – Hitachi – just glass boxes!
- The white building at Hamilton and San Tomas is not nice to look at.
- People generally like the design of Villas on the Boulevard – stoops, articulation, well-design ground-floors, elevated residential ground-floors, residential space set back and above the sidewalk – but dislike the building next door, where residential ground floors are right at the sidewalk, there are no stoops or transitions from public to private space, and there are blank walls, utilities, and garage entries along the pedestrian sidewalk.
- CAC members liked the massing, variety, and active ground floor of this building:



- CAC members tended to dislike the boxy architecture of this building:



Public Comment:

- 1 public comment from Jeff: Don't sell ourselves short – we have what developers want and should take advantage of that. Jeff was recently in Barcelona, where the community

would be out and sitting in cafes socializing – in Santa Clara we need to build similar choices for the community to gather. We should encourage an emphasis on ground-floor retail.

- Another community attended but did not comment